

SOCIAL FORCES

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FROM COMMUNITY STUDIES TO REGIONALISM

I

THIS paper indicates something of the way in which certain theoretical aspects of regionalism and folk sociology in the early 1940's have developed from beginnings in community studies of race and folk culture in the early 1900's. In so far as they have a bearing upon social research and planning, as applied to the regional quality and balance of America, there are a number of assumptions. One is that responsible social theory grows naturally out of the synthesis of results of practical empirical studies and, therefore, is basic to planning which is essentially the bridging of the distance between science and knowledge on the one hand and practical problems on the other. Another is that in the social sciences, as in the natural sciences, there is needed the living laboratory for research and planning where the people live and that the smallest and basic unit for the complete scientific study of society is found in the region embodying all the elements of time, of spatial relationships, and of total cultural environment.

The definitive culture to be studied through the region is the folk-regional society, in the study of which folk sociology may assume the new dynamics of a functional sociology as a natural-cultural science which combines the cultural and statistical methods of study. In the folk-regional society, moreover, may be found the laboratory for contrasting the folkways and mores with the stateways and technicways, basic to differentiating the folk society and culture from the state society and civilization now so tragically destructive in contemporary society. In the technicways, as it were, newly discovered through the inquiries of folk sociology, may be found objective ways not only of measuring change but of describing the processes of change basic to an understanding of what is the definitive, enduring human society in a new equilibrium between culture and civiliza-

tion. The particular application of this theory is to American society, and more particularly the southern regions of the United States, which have constituted the several laboratories for study. Still more specifically the Institute for Research in Social Science, the Department of Sociology, and *SOCIAL FORCES* have constituted the later media through which studies have been made and theory developed.

While the emphasis here is primarily upon the theoretical, the assumption is always that sound theory which grows out of "the day's work" is the most practical thing in the world and is basic to all enduring programs of societal development. Such theory is peculiarly essential in contemporary society when, as is commonly assumed, the foundations of society are being shaken and "fundamentals" are being questioned. Such sound organic theory is essential to the redefining of many of our assumptions of democracy, equality, opportunity, "Americanism," and of developing sound programs of security, defense, and public welfare. Both the need and the effectiveness of such theory perhaps may best be reflected in the postulates of social planning, the essence of which may be found in the search for balance and equilibrium between and among conflicting and complex forces and processes. The more detailed specifications and implications of the evolving theory of regionalism and folk sociology are stated subsequently as growing out of the several stages of inquiry and records.

Now we come to answer the questions as to how the concept of regionalism and the search for the regional balance of America ever evolved through the southern regional studies made at the University of North Carolina during the last twenty-five years. How did we come upon the concept of regionalism as sociological theory inherent in the larger application of ecology to human society? How did we come to the concept of folk sociology

and the folk society as a general sociology studying the definitive society? How did we come to assume the relatively new phenomena, the technic-ways, as ways of explaining and also of directing the rapidly changing society which is contemporary technological civilization?

The answers to these questions given here in the nature of a special twentieth and twenty-fifth anniversary of *SOCIAL FORCES*, and the Institute for Research in Social Science, and the Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina must be partly a rationalization of one author's interpretation reflected first in his own work, and second in the cooperative efforts of his colleagues. This rationalization is essentially of two sorts. One is found in the earlier beginnings and backgrounds in the concrete study of the Negro and of folk culture in Mississippi and Georgia in the first decade of 1900. The other is the gradual expansion of folk studies and regional research at the University of North Carolina from 1920 to 1945. In the years covering these periods there were firsthand studies and observations in all the major regions of America set in the framework of current sociological theory and trends.

II

The earlier community inquiries into race relations, to which we refer, were concrete studies of Negroes in southern towns, begun in Mississippi and Georgia in 1905. These studies grew out of the observation that there had been practically no scientific studies of the Negro in the South; that the South itself was amazingly ignorant about the Negro; that practically no one was interested in the subject; and that nevertheless this was the distinctive field of inquiry where knowledge must be had before progress in other respects could be made. In the wake of the community studies themselves it soon became evident that in the folk character of the Negroes and their relationship with the whites, in their folk songs and sayings, their folk beliefs and folk culture were to be found an extraordinary untapped mine of information that was not only essential to the understanding of the Negro and the South but which would soon be passing beyond the point where it could be recovered. To the community studies, therefore, were added the subsidiary inquiries into the folk society of the Negro which existed and has always existed within the white "state society" and which has been responsible for much of the vitality

and surviving powers and progress of the Negro in the United States.

The first of the background community inquiries was a concrete study of the Negroes of Oxford, Mississippi. This was followed by a similar study of Covington, Georgia, in order to begin comparative studies of relatively similar communities. Each of these southern towns had a population of less than three thousand. Each was neighbor to a college, the one the University of Mississippi and the other, Emory College, at Oxford, Georgia, one mile from Covington. Each had about the same ratio of Negroes to whites, and as towns in the lower South reflected much similarity in segregation patterns and racial folk-ways. Other points of resemblance in economy and culture were sufficiently numerous to establish a satisfactory homogeneity index.

Having made these concrete studies and summarized their findings, the effort was made to set up a continuing frame of inquiry to test the findings in other similar communities. First, some fifty towns through the Southeast, with population under ten thousand, were checked through the questionnaire and schedule method, some by mail, some through assignment to individuals known to the author. Following this, then, other still more general inquiries were made in some twenty-five other towns in the Southeast. The results were published in 1909.¹

It was emphasized that the study was "of town life rather than city or rural; is further a study of community relationship, showing something of Negro life as it is related to the whites . . . its purpose is to get at a proper beginning rather than to generalize on ultimate solutions." Again, the purpose of the work, as published, was stated as "an effort to contribute something toward a scientific knowledge of the Negro . . . to describe the conditions of Negro life in southern communities . . . not as a final treatment of the entire subject but as a beginning, along with other special studies, for a scientific but practical study of the Negro in the South."²

¹ Howard W. Odum, *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro. Research into the Conditions of the Negro Race in Southern Towns. A Study in Race Traits, Tendencies and Prospects*. Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, V. 37 (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), pp. 305-606.

² *Ibid.*, especially pp. 5 and 18.

In the prosecution of these studies, it early became clear that much of the realistic situation was not to be measured in terms of socio-economic data, both because the records were not there and because they failed to measure the attitudes, folk-ways, and institutional character of the people. Studies were begun then and continued for a number of years, especially into the folk songs and folk beliefs of the southern Negro. In the first publication in this series, *Religious Folk-Songs of the Southern Negroes*, the first sentence was: "To know the soul of a people and to find the source from which flows the expression of folk-thought is to comprehend in a large measure the capabilities of that people."³

The general framework of the study was expressed in the following quotations: "To preserve and interpret the contributions of a people to civilization is to add to the science of folk-history. Posterity has often judged peoples without having so much as a passing knowledge of their inner life, while treasures of folk-lore and song, the psychic, religious, and social expression of the race, have been permitted to remain in complete obscurity. Likewise peoples have lived contemporaneously side by side, but ignorant of the treasures of folk-gems that lay hidden and wasting all about them. The heart and soul of the real people are unknown, science is deprived of a needed contribution, and the world is hindered in its effort to discover the full significance of the psychological, religious, social, and political history of mankind. That which is distinctly the product of racial life and development deserves a better fate than to be blown away with changing environment and not even remain to enrich the soil from which it sprang. Justice to the race and the scientific spirit demand the preservation of all interesting and valuable additions to the knowledge of folk-life. . . . The exact form of expression itself constitutes a contribution to knowledge and literature."⁴

The next publications in the series were two articles in the *Journal of American Folk Lore* in July-September and October-December, 1911, under the general title "Folk-Song and Folk-Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes: A Study in Folk-Thought and Folk-

³ Howard W. Odum. "Religious Folk-Songs of the Southern Negroes," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education*, 3 (July 1909), p. 265.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

Ways." In these articles it was pointed out that the collection of secular folk songs among the Negroes had been permitted to lapse; that the supply seemed almost inexhaustible; and that the current Negro folk songs were no less distinctive than the earlier slave songs.⁵ The conclusion was that "they are most valuable to the student of sociology and anthropology as well as the student of literature and the ballad."⁶ These studies of southern communities and of folk life were made from the University of Mississippi, where the author was instructor from 1905-1908. Parts of the material on the folk songs and folk thought were used for the doctor's dissertation at Clark University and parts of the community studies for the doctor's dissertation at Columbia.⁷

The next studies, again comparative studies of Negro communities, were made in Philadelphia from 1910-1913,⁸ under the auspices of the Philadelphia Bureau of Municipal Research. These studies followed two general patterns of approach. One was the application of intelligence and learning tests to Negro children in the schools alongside white children in the same schools, together with the subsequent study of the community environment of each group. The other was comparative reference to W. E. B. DuBois' notable study of the Philadelphia Negro to indicate certain trends in the decade between the time of his study and the present author's. The study was divided into three main divisions. "The first was a brief study of the Negro population of Philadelphia; the second was a study of the school status, schools, progress and education of Negro children in the public schools of Philadelphia; the third embodied the results of more detailed studies of school children, including educational and psychological tests, anthropometric measurements, and research into related facts concerning Negro children."

A summary of this study was published in the

⁵ Howard W. Odum, "Folk-Song and Folk Poetry as Found in the Secular Songs of the Southern Negroes: A Study in Folk Thought and Folk-Ways," *Journal of American Folk Lore* (July-September 1911; Part II, October-December, 1911).

⁶ *Ibid.*, (July-September, 1911), p. 1.

⁷ *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro*.

⁸ These studies were made under the auspices of the Bureau of Municipal Research in direct cooperation with Martin G. Brumbaugh, then superintendent of the Philadelphia public schools and later Governor of Pennsylvania.

Annals of the American Academy, in 1913.⁹ A few general preliminary conclusions were ventured as a result of these studies, but presented primarily as assumptions to be rechecked. With reference to the results of the tests, which were made in consultation with Professor Thorndike of Columbia University, it was suggested that the efficiency of the Negro children varied inversely with age and with the complexity of the process. This followed the pattern of extraordinary age retardation in the school grades. Immediately, however, it was clear that these general conclusions meant little until the home life and community relationships had been compared. A distinguished and able Negro nurse was, therefore, employed to work with other investigators to check upon the home and community conditions. The result of this indicated that other things being equal it seemed quite likely the home and community environment, including bio-chemical factors of diet and social conditioning factors of segregation, were sufficiently different to account for most of the differences in achievement. These studies later became the basis for the conclusions drawn from subsequent folk-regional studies that, in the scientific sense, the distinction between race differences and race differentials is a fundamental one and assumes that races instead of being inherently different are group products of differentials due to the cumulative power of the physical and folk-regional cultural environment.¹⁰

From these studies it was increasingly apparent that at most they were "materials of science" rather than scientific studies, and that perhaps their chief value was to indicate the need for more generic and inductive studies. In an article in *The Journal of Race Development*, in 1915, the statement of this need was ventured in the continuation of this interest from the University of Georgia. In substance, this article held that "there is a decided tendency on the part of both individuals and communities to reduce any and

⁹ Howard W. Odum, "Negro Children in the Public Schools of Philadelphia," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (September, 1913).

¹⁰ Howard W. Odum. "The Position of the Negro in the American Social Order in 1950," *Journal of Negro Education*, VIII (July 1939), 589. See also, *Race and Rumors of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943).

all problems that arise because of the presence of the Negroes in the United States to one commonly accepted composite 'The Negro Problem.' It matters little whether the question considered be one of race development, admixture, or race adjustment on the one hand, or whether it be one of concrete and specific detail of study, philanthropy or public policy on the other, the usual mode of thought tends to be essentially the same. . . . Hence, arises an increasing realization of the need for scientific study of the several problems of the Negro. . . . Most of the local problems of the Negro are local in name only. A fundamental step of one community is of basic importance to a whole group of communities, which find it necessary to deal with the same question. The community relation to the problem is representative of the total national problem, and any step in the study of public policy for one community may mean much to the nation at large. For, after all, the basis for practical measures can be had only through extensive and thorough study, in which the most effective results will be accomplished through the most scientific methods, provided such study is properly correlated with the problems at hand. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of academic and scientific work including the departments of education, sociology, anthropology, and psychology, it is embarrassing to find few facts concerning innate race qualities, and to find that little attempt has been made to ascertain by objective methods the genesis and evolution of such qualities."¹¹

III

When the Institute for Research in Social Science was established at the University of North Carolina, with the specific keystone of its program that of Regional Research and Study, immediately the Negro and the folk life became a first unit. One of the first steps was to rework and publish some of the earlier collections of Negro folk songs and to recapture as much as possible of their vividness and appeal at that time as well as to revive the interest in the older Negro songs and to introduce the Negro workday song. They were projected not as primarily folklore or folk song or literary study, but as materials for the study of folk culture.

¹¹ Howard W. Odum, "Some Studies in the Negro Problems of the Southern States." *The Journal of Race Development*, 6 (October 1915), pp. 185-186.

The first volume was published in 1925 under the title of *The Negro and His Songs* and was presented as a unit in this field. "This volume," so the preface began, "is presented simply as a part of the story of the Negro. Other volumes are planned to follow: another collection of songs brought more nearly up to date; a presentation of song and story centered around case studies; a series of efforts to portray objectively the story of race progress in the United States in the last half dozen decades."¹² Furthermore, the volume was presented as "a part of the story; a small part, it is true, but nevertheless a very real and vivid part, rich in examples of the Negro's creative effort within the limitations of the collection, vivid in the visualization of his imaginings and the technique of his song."¹³

In beginning the new studies it was suggested that a desirable attainment would be to get the South to "look at" instead of to "feel about" the Negro. In this exercise it was recalled that the Negro's singing had universal appeal and always reflected much of the personal and cultural situation in which the Negro common man found himself.

In 1926, *Negro Workaday Songs* was published with the following note: "*Negro Workaday Songs* is the third volume of a series of folk background studies of which *The Negro and His Songs* was the first and *Folkbeliefs of the Southern Negro* was the second. The series will include a number of other volumes on the Negro and likewise a number presenting folk aspects of other groups. The reception which the first volumes have received gives evidence that the plan of the series to present scientific, descriptive, and objective studies in as interesting and readable form as possible may be successful in a substantial way. Since the data for background studies are, for the time being, practically unlimited, it is hoped that other volumes, appearing as they become available and timely, may glimpse the whole range."¹⁴ And again it was pointed out that "here is important material for the newer scientific interest which is taking the place of the old sentimental viewpoint.

¹² Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1925), p. v.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁴ Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), p. ix.

And here is a mine of descriptive and objective data to substitute for the emotional and subjective attitudes of the older days.

"It is a day of great promise in the United States when both races, North and South, enter upon a new era of the rediscovery of the Negro and face the future with an enthusiasm for facts, concerning both the newer creative urge and the earlier background sources."¹⁵

Other regional studies of the Negro followed, some published in books, some in a varied series of articles, and some remaining in the catalogue of the Institute's unpublished studies. Of the books, the following are illustrative: *Folkbeliefs of the Southern Negro* by Newbell N. Puckett, *Phonophotography in Folk Music* by Milton Metfessel, *Rainbow Round My Shoulder* by Howard W. Odum, *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend* by Guy B. Johnson, *Wings on My Feet* by Howard W. Odum, *The Negro Sings a New Heaven* by Mary A. Grissom, *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island* by Guy B. Johnson, *Black Yeomanry* by T. J. Wooster, Jr., *Cold Blue Moon* by Howard W. Odum, *Negro Child Welfare in North Carolina* by Wiley B. Sanders, *The Tragedy of Lynching* and *Preface to Peasantry* by Arthur F. Raper, *Race and Rumors of Race* by Howard W. Odum. In addition to these Guy B. Johnson directed the sociological inquiries of the Myrdal study and contributed the first part to Klineberg's *Characteristics of the American Negro*.¹⁶

As in the earlier studies of the Negro, so again it was very clear that it was the region and the folk that constituted the field of inquiry, and that the whole regional culture was the basis upon which realistic studies must be made. As a medium of social interpretation, *THE JOURNAL OF SOCIAL FORCES* was founded in 1922, and during its first few years, prior to becoming *SOCIAL FORCES*, its editorial and workshop notes were often devoted to a critical appraisal of southern culture and economy. From these critical inquiries grew other publications and research projects. In *Southern Pioneers in Social Interpretation* the keynote was stated somewhat in terms of deficiencies, which were later to be measured in more scientific terms. In the meantime, the process of regional exploration was continued.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁶ See Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944). Also Otto Klineberg, *The Characteristics of the American Negro*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944).

These exploratory efforts have been described on various occasions and have been partially summarized from time to time. Four types of studies in the southern regional group were listed as illustrations of regional and folk portraiture, as materials for social science, and as illustrating the development of methodology and personnel in social research within a given area.¹⁷ The first of these has to do with studies of folk culture which emphasize primarily the more primitive elements of society. From these studies come materials and methods which throw light upon social capacities, racial capacities, the development of culture patterns and areas.

Samplings of these notes, taken from southern regional studies include Milton Metfessel's *Phonophotography in Folk Music*, a cooperative effort between psychologists and sociologists, through an exhaustive analysis involving more than sixty thousand computations, throws much light on the mooted question and qualities of folk music of modern, cultured peoples. Guy B. Johnson's *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island* and other studies throw new light upon the relation of the Negro spirituals to old New England and southern church hymns, and in showing that the Gullah language, commonly assumed to be of foreign imprint, to be primarily English throws considerable new light upon the Negro's patterns of adaptation. Newbell N. Puckett's *Folkbeliefs of the Southern Negro* provides similar fundamental materials for the comparison of Negro and white cultures and for the study of adaptation. Other portraiture which enrich the social materials for the study of cultures are found in T. J. Wooster's *Black Yeomanry: Life on St. Helena Island*, Guion Griffis Johnson's *Social History of the Sea Islands*, Guy B. Johnson's *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend*, Mary Grissom's *The Negro Sings a New Heaven*, Howard W. Odum's *Rainbow Round My Shoulder, Wings on My Feet, Cold Blue Moon*, Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson's *The Negro and His Songs and Negro Workday Songs*, George Pullen Jackson's *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, and other studies of mountain folk song and culture now under way. Other studies illustrating this type of material of science may be found in Lee M. Brooks' "The New Mobility and the Coastal Islands," and Rupert B. Vance's "The Concept of the Region."

The second type of regional portraiture was concerned more nearly with materials for the study of that sort of folk society which, comprehending the

¹⁷ Howard W. Odum, "Notes on the Study of Regional and Folk Society," *Social Forces*, X (December 1931), 164-175.

whole culture life of the region, reflects the peculiar civilization which still transcends the state-ways of government. To use again an illustration from the southern region, the folk society following the Civil War was more powerful and effective than the combined bayonets and governmental routine of the whole Nation. The study of such a society has been illuminating not only to sociologists and historians but to political scientists, and provides much data for the scientific study of democratic government. It is generally admitted by the historians that scientific study of such folk society would have avoided many blunders both North and South. It is possible to study in that region four generations of Americans whose changing cultures provided the most dramatic episodes in the American scene and comprehended every known element in the architecture of modern civilization. Manifestly, this was not merely a local problem but one of national importance, which could be attacked through regional analysis. Manifestly, also, such portraiture suggests many other illustrations from other regions.

Samplings from southern regional studies of this sort include Rupert B. Vance's *Human Factors in Cotton Culture* and *Human Geography of the South*, Broadus Mitchell's *William Gregg: Factory Master of the Old South*, Howard W. Odum's *An American Epoch: Southern Portraiture in the National Picture* and *Southern Pioneers in Social Interpretation*, F. M. Green's *Constitutional Development in the South Atlantic States, 1776-1860*, Guion Griffis Johnson's *Social History of North Carolina*, William S. Jenkins' *Political Theories of the Slave Holder*, Julia C. Spruill's *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies*, Guion Griffis Johnson's *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, Benjamin B. Kendrick and Alex M. Arnett's *The South Looks at Its Past*; and the larger compendium, Howard W. Odum's *Southern Regions of the United States* and its interpretation by Gerald W. Johnson, *The Wasted Land*.

The third type of regional portraiture is concerned more nearly with materials for the study of practical social problems of economic or social policy, or of social planning, whether of local or national import.

Samplings from southern regional studies of problems include Clarence Heer's *Wages and Income in the South*, J. J. Rhyne's *Some Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages*, Claudius Murchison's *King Cotton Is Sick*, Harriet L. Herring's *Welfare Work in*

Mill Villages, George Mitchell's *Labor Unionism in the South*, T. J. Woofter's *The Plight of Cigarette Tobacco*, J. F. Steiner and Roy M. Brown's *North Carolina Chain Gang*, Paul W. Wager's *County Government in North Carolina*, C. K. Brown's *State Movement in Railroad Development and The State Highway System of North Carolina*, Roy M. Brown's *Public Poor Relief in North Carolina*, H. C. Brearley's *Homicide in South Carolina*, Harriet L. Herring's *Southern Industry and Regional Development*, Howard W. Odum's *Southern Regions of the United States*, and Arthur Raper's *Tragedy of Lynching and Sharecroppers All*. The long list of unpublished studies is catalogued in a separate bibliography.

A fourth type of regional effort has tended to emphasize cooperative, methodological, and theoretical studies, partly incidental to the regional portraiture of the special studies and partly as an objective in the development of social science, social research, and personnel within the given region. An illustration of cooperative efforts is that in which the Social Science Research Council cooperated in making possible a two-year study of St. Helena Island. The three published studies, *Black Yeomanry*, *Social History of the Sea Islands*, and *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island*, already listed, resulted from cooperative study—anthropological, economic, historical, psychological, sociological. The field work was done by representatives of Harvard, Columbia, George Peabody College for Teachers, together with certain specialists from State departments, in addition to the staff from the University of North Carolina. *Southern Regions of the United States* was done under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council as were parts of *Recent Social Trends*.¹⁸

The development of more critical analyses, better methods of research, practical avenues for presenting results and for increasing resources are all important problems in such regional study. Efforts toward these objectives included early round tables by visiting specialists, such as Charles E. Merriam, Clark Wissler, Ulrich B. Phillips, Walton Hale Hamilton, and the series of regional conferences on teaching and research in the social sciences. A first regional conference on local government was held in the early 1920's and the Institute has had the cooperation of the Southern Regional Committee of the Social Science Research Council. A number of regional cooperative institutes have been held, notably the one in the

summer of 1936 on "Social Science and Regional Development," and in the spring of 1940, one on "Population Research, Regional Research, and the Measurement of Regional Development."

Finally there were the later efforts toward both synchronizing and making practical applications of all these regional studies in terms of larger composite regional studies, of their application to teaching and research, and of their relation to regional national planning. A companion volume to *Southern Regions of the United States* is Rupert B. Vance's notable new volume, *All These People: The Nation's Resources in the South*, appearing in 1945 as the most comprehensive scientific study of a regional population published up to now. Two new volumes embodying the regional synthesis and sociological theory to appear in 1945 are *The Way of the South: A Biography of the Southern United States and Understanding Society*.¹⁹ The regional approach had previously been featured in their *Introduction to Social Research* by Odum and Jocher²⁰ and in Odum and Moore's *American Regionalism* and Odum's *American Social Problems*.²¹ Other titles featuring the regional approach to study and planning included Odum's *The Case for Regional National Planning*, *Planning an American Region*, Odum, Becker and Others, *Regional Planning Technique*, Odum's *The Regional Approach to National Social Planning*, Vance's *Regional Reconstruction: A Way Out for the South*, Vance's *The South's Place in the Nation*, Woofter's *Southern Population and Social Planning*, Moore's *What Is Regionalism?*, Vance's *Farmers Without Land*, and Vance's *Research Memorandum on Population Redistribution Within the United States*.

For practical purposes of planning, financing, and research the program of regional social study and practice for the Institute for Research in Social Science was projected under several divisions. Naturally, there was some overlapping and considerable intertwining of the special subdivisions, the list of studies from which researches were to be chosen including more than 200 units, and the extent of future researches depending upon resources and facilities which may be made available. (The groups were: social, political, economic, and legal aspects of government; agri-

¹⁸ Both by Howard W. Odum and to be published by The Macmillan Co.

¹⁹ Henry Holt and Co., 1929.

²¹ Henry Holt and Co., 1936 and 1939.

¹⁸ *Recent Social Trends in The United States*, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1933).

culture and rural organization; social-industrial relations; crime and criminal justice; racial groups; special social and educational institutions; historical and cultural backgrounds and demography; cooperative and theoretical studies.) Within each of these subdivisions individual projects were selected with the following considerations in view: With the exception of the theoretical and cooperative studies, problems were selected within the State and regional field but also with a view to generic interest and value to social science anywhere. They were selected also with a view to long-time periods of research but capable of subdividing into units which are susceptible to shorter-time completion. They were selected also with a view to available materials and resources, available personnel, and practicability of successful completion. Included in the theoretical and cooperative studies were units of regional and folk study in other parts of the United States, in Canada, Mexico, South America, as well as studies of transitional society wherever possible in other areas.

V

A great deal more might be added. Perhaps this catalogue is adequate to indicate how our theoretical assumptions and conclusions have grown "out of the day's work." That is, our theories are vitally realistic in that they emerge from study and experiment, on the one hand, and from needs and experience, on the other. It is likely that the full import of our assumptions that "sound theory is the most practical thing in the world" would not have been manifest except for another very realistic factor. This was the challenge of the region and the nation to implement social research through practical regional planning and development. This, in turn, was accentuated by the national trends toward social planning to meet the needs of depression and emergency and to carry on social theory as far as possible into reality of the American scene. The situation was more than the old proverbial "necessity is the mother of invention"; it was Thorstein Veblen's reverse application that invention is the mother of necessity in the sense that science, invention, and technology, together with world situations, having brought the nation to this point of emergency, necessity for planning and reconstruction became the chief keystone of realistic social science.

Thus, there were two principal backgrounds in

which the emergence of theory and planning was reflected. One was that of social research experimentation within the frame of reference of a major region of the United States; and the other the emergency of regional planning in the nation as it evolved from the earlier concept of metropolitan planning into both a philosophy and a technique of national development. The first example was more in the nature of a laboratory and testing ground; the second was reflected in the logical attempt to meet emergencies and to comprehend in practical ways the length and breadth and power of a great nation in transition.

First, with reference to southern regional research, it seemed fair to assume that social study and social planning in order to be realistic and responsible must find their laboratory and their data within the region where the greatest reality abounds. Thus, we set up a sort of living regional laboratory where social phenomena could be studied and social planning explored. Such a laboratory, however, was not to be interpreted as provincial or local, but rather a concrete laboratory for the testing of generic premises. Problems selected for study and areas chosen for planning were to be those which would have generic value throughout all parts of the country. Thus, agricultural reconstruction, social-industrial relationships, the reintegration of agrarian culture in American life, race relations and prospects, the redistribution of opportunity and wealth, the techniques of making democracy effective in the unequal places, the organic nature of the folk life and the new realism of the people were universal problems, finding their reality, however, in the living laboratory in which they grew.

It soon became clear, however, in the next place, that so far from being provincial or limited, these regional efforts required a more thorough background and a wider knowledge for successful accomplishment than did the ordinary historical or theoretical approaches which focus merely upon principles, concepts, abstract laws, and the like. That is, it was necessary to reinforce our equipment in methods and approaches to the study of social problems; it was necessary to study more comprehensively the cultural backgrounds involved in history and anthropology; it was necessary to reinforce our knowledge with geography and other physical sciences. All this meant that it was necessary also to have a closer alignment and closer cooperation with and among all the

social sciences. Not only this, but here was a frame of reference for the study of culture and economy, which, without any doubt, set the tempo for a new era in the cooperation of the social sciences with the physical sciences, in the co-operation of the so-called academic institutions and the professional schools and the great land-grant colleges and their co-operation with governmental agencies.

Thus, work in this regional laboratory for social study and planning led to two relatively new methodological approaches. One was the co-ordination and co-operation of the various sciences and social sciences and the other was regionalism as a methodological approach, in which not only the attack upon universal problems could be made by all the sciences and social sciences, but in which it became clear that the folk-regional society or culture constitutes the supreme unit for social study and the smallest unit in which all of the factors, including those of natural resources, human resources, and cultural conditioning, may be found.

There emerged, therefore, an important theoretical conclusion as to the rôle of regionalism in national analysis and planning. Yet the chief value after all was practical. It became clear that the understanding of one region with its backgrounds, limitations, and prospects could be attained only through a sort of science of the region, which may be likened unto a gestalt, in which all factors are sought out and interpreted in their proper perspective. That is, each part is not only related to every part, but also planning for one aspect cannot successfully be done without adequate consideration of all aspects. Seen in the light of such a premise, a region, in this case the South, reflects everything that goes into the architecture of civilization, and its problems and prospects in many ways are reflected mirror-like in such ways as to enable us to stand off and look on them objectively and work towards a better mastery.

Further than this, however, it became very clear that it was not possible to characterize one region in terms of useful measures unless and until we had characterized the rest of the nation and the other regions by similar comparisons. The regional approach, therefore, became a dynamic tool in the attempt to understand the living geography of the nation and to place each of the great regions in their proper setting to the whole.

This led still further, namely, to the conclusion that it is not only not possible for one region to develop without the co-operation of the other regions and of the Federal Government, but also that only through strong regional development may the nation as a whole be enriched. Thus, through the newer reaches of regionalism as opposed to the old sectionalism and through the almost universal trend toward centralization in government and economy, we came to a logical and scientific interpretation of the obligation of the Federal Government to co-operate with each of the regions. This obligation, of course, has been reinforced by the background of historical and political action and of cultural and economic differentials, in addition to these fundamental trends.

This still is not the end. Immediately with the movement to have regionalism transcend sectionalism and the trend toward Federal centralization over States' rights, there arise fundamental issues and many points of conflict. These issues again are of universal and generic interest to peoples everywhere to the end that centralization and totalitarian patterns may not transcend democratic form and retard progress. Thus, regionalism becomes the tool for decentralization, the buffer between Federal and State conflicts, and if there is any way to prevent totalitarianism in a great complex, urban, and industrial civilization of standardized tendency and to retain a quality civilization in a quantity world, it is through regionalism that it must be effected.

VI

In order to interpret more vividly and comprehensively this concept of American regionalism, we have often tried to approach the subject from a more or less popular viewpoint. On the above assumptions and with a view to exploring both the wide range of meanings and the "usefulness" of the concepts, we, therefore, sometimes presented the concept of regionalism under four divisions: first, as a science; second, as an American frontier; third, as a tool or technique of government; and, fourth, as a motivation or purpose.

Regionalism in the comprehensive sense in which it is now becoming dynamic and articulate in American society is a science in several meanings. First, it is a science in the sense that it represents a substantial body of scientific materials gathered by authentic research specialists using

acceptable scientific methods. This body of knowledge comprehends a wide range and area, including research in geography, ecology, other biological inquiries, as well as historical, economic, and sociological research into areal situations and phenomena. Furthermore, these materials are being carefully analyzed, interpreted, and utilized in effective ways.

In the second place, regionalism may well become a science in the sense that it represents a sound inquiry into the organic character of the relation between men and resources, between areas and culture, between physical environment and cultural environment. All societies begin with the area or region and expand out into larger developments, so that culture becomes as natural as the physical, areal environment itself. Regionalism lies at the basis of the larger ecology and helps to interpret sociology as a natural science in the sense of measuring the capacity of social organisms to function within the framework of their natural environment and inherent endowment.

Regionalism may be interpreted as a science further in the sense, therefore, that it comprehends what we call the folk-regional society, which is the smallest unit through which all society can be studied. The community, for instance, does not comprehend all the factors in time area and cultural conditioning. The same may be said for the family; while the individual is too small a unit. The folk-regional society, therefore, becomes the basis for folk sociology, which must inevitably become the general science of societal development.

Regionalism may be interpreted in the scientific sense in still another way, namely, as a methodological approach to research in this regional approach. It is not only possible to utilize the general cultural sociological approach alongside the descriptive and historical inquiries, but the folk region affords the best possible laboratory for statistical and objective measurements within a frame of reference comprehensive enough to be complete but limited enough to insure thoroughness.

The regional approach also affords the best opportunity for the coöperation and coöordination of all the social sciences attacking a problem and likewise for the coöperation of the physical sciences and the social sciences. This phase, however, we have discussed under our second category of

regionalism as a frontier. But more important, it will be science in the sense that we are all coming to an acceptable delineation of a relatively small number of major group-of-states regions for multiple purposes, determined by indices available for the largest number of agencies and meeting the largest number of needs, and avoiding the largest possible number of conflicts. When we study regions, therefore, we all study the same thing. We also determine the meaning of subregions for special administrative or functional purposes which we designate as districts, and there will be as many districts as may be needed in each of the major administrative areas. We also define subregions as the great natural regions, river valley, soil, climate. And we study these and plan for these through an over-all, central, national arrangement as opposed to the States and regions and districts of our formal regional arrangement. There is, then, of course, the final definition of the State and the zone. Regionalism will become a science when the agencies of the government approximate uniformity in the use for research, census taking, and planning the same number of regions, use the same terminology for comparative purposes, and develop a scientific public administration, in which the region becomes a balance wheel between the extreme States' rights and Federal centralization.

In the second place, regionalism is a *frontier* in several ways. We all recall, I believe, the frontier tradition of America, such that Frederick Jackson Turner was wont to say that America's culture was largely conditioned by the frontier civilization. First, there was the Seaboard, East, North, and South. Then there was the great trek across Appalachia into "Kaintuck," on to the great Northwest and great Southwest; then on into the Middle West, and the Oregon trail and the Gold Rush to the Far West, and then frontiers back again into the great plains to the Southwest.

Then you recall that "everybody" said we had no more frontiers of a physical sort, and, therefore, we must turn to the social frontiers. This, of course, was not true, although it was partially true and is still partially true. Now, the new frontiers of American regions constitute both a physical frontier of soil, resources, and the like, and a cultural frontier, both of which in their developing are analogous to the earlier frontier upon which America was built. For literally the conservation and development of the resources in relation to the

people in each of these great regions is as much a needed frontier and as difficult a task as was the exploitation and conquest of the earlier frontiers. So, too, in the development of the peoples and cultures in each of the great regions we follow a universal pattern of building a great society from the many community, State, and regional units outward towards a total culture. We only need to look at new developments and defense requirements, the redistribution of population, of wealth and opportunity, to see that here is literally a new frontier important enough to call out the best of American creative effort.

The region is again a frontier in the sense that in the development of the regions of America we have for the first time the merging of the physical and the social sciences in this balance of men and resources and in the development of wealth to be used for human weal. This is also a new frontier. It is also a new frontier in the great task of the future made necessary in the modern world of supertechnology, namely, discovery of a new balance and equilibrium between supercivilization and American culture in the balance between men and machines, between men and resources. If ever there was a new frontier this is one.

Regionalism is next a tool and technique of government and development in the sense that there can be no planning American style except that it takes into consideration the fundamental principles of geographic representation. Over-centralization in planning, ignoring the rights of the States and regions, is contrary to the American principle. Exaggerated States' rights and walls built around the States in competitive process are no longer tenable in the complex inter-State American relationships.

Regionalism becomes a tool for decentralization, and through a national-regional-state-research-and planning council arrangement it becomes a sort of fourth wheel of American government, in which there is added to the judicial, the administrative, and legislative, the advisory groups, whose personnel, both in number and distinction, shall parallel those of the Supreme Court and members of the Cabinet, to which will be added representation from each of the great regions.

Regionalism then becomes the primary tool for American planning, flexible in time and geography, of, for, and by all the people, all the regions, and all the institutions. It becomes a tool for the

redistribution of wealth and opportunity, because this can be done in the American way only by creating the capacity in each region to produce wealth and to consume it adequately in relation to the people and the region, and in relation to a balanced economy of man, resources, and regions in the perspective of the total national interest.

Regionalism, then, manifestly becomes a great purpose or motivation. An advanced student who had lived many years abroad and, in particular, in Russia suggested that American regionalism in the sense of this science and tool of American development is the ideal substitute for communism or the extreme utopian type of concept which so appeals to the younger people. Regionalism as a science, as a frontier, as a tool, and a purpose, is something that the young people can get hold of, in which they can participate in the development of the American life rather than merely talk about it and criticize it. In regionalism, there is the same high purpose and motivation of the earlier forefathers, recapitulating much of the great task of conserving and developing the physical resources and of developing and restating the ideals of democracy.

Manifestly, now it must be clear that there can be no concept of the region, except as it is a *component, constituent part of the total nation*. The region cannot be just an area or just a State or a separatism, or an isolated self-sufficing group of units. The very definition of the region always connotes that it is a contributing part to, of, for, and by the total nation. It is, therefore, the opposite of sectionalism, of blocs, and of ever-seeking political units. It is what we have called in America regionalism, the historical and cultural approach to national integration. Under this concept regionalism, therefore, cannot lead primarily to competition and conflict, because in the essence of regionalism will be found a strategy which matches resources and people in each region and those arrangements which compete least with those of other regions, because the total objective is enrichment of the region and the people in relation to the total national ideal. In return, this enrichment of the nation always leads to a return service on the part of the Federal Government to each region in terms of leadership, equalization fund, scientific research, expert guidance, and a fellowship and exchange of technical skills and personnel and resources.

VII

This, however, was still not the end. We return again to our earlier assumptions that sound theory is the most practical thing in the world, and by the same token it develops from the day's work in the sense that research, exploration, and survey become the bases upon which enduring conclusions are reached. Our studies of the folk and of the folk society have led us to conclude that the folk-regional society is the smallest unit through which a comprehensive study of all society may be made, and that folk sociology seeking balance and equilibrium between the folkways and the stateways, between the folk society and the state society, between voluntary action and coercion becomes the definitive sociology. In so far as the laboratory for folk sociology is the folk-regional society, sociology, as indicated in the first pages of our report, becomes a natural science in the more comprehensive and realistic sense of science and society.

Moreover, just as the study of regionalism has led us to the broader inquiry concerning the unity of all society and the study of the southern regions indicated the necessity for studying all regions in their comparative and contrasting relationships, so the study of the folk society necessitates the study of the contrasting state society. So, too, the study of the folkways as basic to culture and folk society necessitated the study of the stateways of modern technology and their impact upon culture and led to the discovery of the new phenomenon of technicways which transcend the folkways and supplant the mores in modern contemporary society. The study of technicways, therefore, becomes a major problem of inquiry, with implications to the modern world perhaps as important as any that have been presented in a long time. The technicways, therefore, become a form of measuring differences between the folkways and stateways, between the old folk culture and modern technology, and lead to the further assumption of fundamental distinction between culture and civilization. From this point it becomes necessary to explore further the possibility of balance between culture and civilization in a world where there is apparently too much civilization and too little culture.

This led us to suggest two testing grounds for university exploration into the study of this new

balance between civilization and culture. The first lies within the framework of a greater Americanism approximated through the new regionalism, the theme of which I have characterized as essentially that of a great American nation, the land and the people, in whose continuity and unity of development, through a fine equilibrium of geographic, cultural, and historical factors, must be found not only the testing grounds of American democracy, but, according to many observers, the hope of western civilization. Manifestly, this is a task that requires all that all groups of scientists can do.

The second is found in the search, not for what science and technology are doing to society, but what the processes are through which such tremendous transformations are being wrought. We have voluminous reports on the effects of invention and technology on society, but little on how they come to pass. I venture to predict, therefore, an entirely new area for the combined inquiries of the physical and social sciences. This will be research into the startling new phenomena of the technicways, which, in contemporary civilization, transcend the old folkways and supplant the mores, thus, so modifying human behavior and institutions as to outmode the earlier rate of societal evolution.

Now this new frontier of the technicways does not seem to me to be merely a new series of jargon and terminology, for just as the old folkways and mores were practical ways of meeting needs in the long, cultural road of evolution, ultimately leading to the development of institutions, morals, and learning, so in this hectic world of bigness, speed, technology, super-organization, the technicways are the new ways of meeting the needs of a technological world. One only needs to look at the new technicways of war which violate all of the old folkways and agreements with reference to women, children, hospitals, institutions of learning, art; or the swift-changing episodes of our own science, economics, learning, morals, changing behavior patterns, and the demands upon our institutions which are accelerating the whole rate of our cultural evolution.

Perhaps in all of this we are appealing for a new opportunity for the social sciences, in which, working upon the great results of the physical sciences and working with them, we may attain results in some of the fields of social inventions

and social technicways, which may match the flood tide of technology now sweeping down upon us. Here is a task adequate for any university and for all that the new social sciences can muster.

VIII

The implications of the technicways have in their application to modern society been indicated in many ways, and illustrations are abundant. This field, however, is a major area of research and now represents mostly certain larger premises and assumptions which are being tested both through statistical measurements and cultural analyses. From the study of the mechanical technicways, which have arisen because of modern technology, the transition to inquiry with reference to social technicways and social inventions all comprehended in the larger framework of social planning, becomes a logical necessity, and by the same token offers an even greater field of research. Another type of approach to the explanation and direction of society may be found in certain premises or social "axioms" which have arisen from the study of the folk-regional society and by contrast the development of the state society and civilization.

It seems profitable to attempt to state certain assumptions growing out of the further development of the field of folk sociology which may serve as general premises to be tested both by further inquiry and by their application to realistic situations. Among such assumptions to be tested as to accuracy of statement and validity of application are the following:

1. The folk-society, the folk-culture, is the elemental and basic culture definitive of all societies in process.

2. The folk-society, characterized by folkways and mores, may be best observed in the folk-regional society, which is the smallest comprehensive definitive unit of society. This folk-regional society is bottomed in the relative balance of man, nature, and culture.

3. Over against the folk-society has been the universal trend toward the state-society, characterized by stateways and technicways, which increases in scope and power until at its crest it approximates the megalopolitan, the technological, the intellectual, the totalitarian culture called civilization.

6. Wherever the folk-society and the state-

society conflict, in the long run, the folk-society always wins both in the sense of the mastery of the one by the other and in the sense of ultimate survival. But in the process leading up to conflict the totalitarian state-society increasingly dominates and weakens the folk-society and contributes to the artificiality of civilization.

5. Whenever the folk-society and the state-society coincide, the resulting society, within the framework of its region and resources, reflects great power for growth and development and is practically irresistible against opposing forces. And when the unity of folkways and stateways is reinforced by the technicways, society reaches its maximum achievement.

6. But when there is conflict between the folk-society and the state-society and when the demands of a supertechnology and an artificial society exceed the capacity of the folk or of their institutions to meet or adjust, there is tension, disorganization, conflict, and ultimately decay until such time as mastery is achieved through a reconstructed folk-society.

7. In the modern contemporary world, mass-trending toward that state-society which is civilization at its crest, there are new societal forces reflected in and measured by the technicways which have transcended the folkways and supplanted the mores of the earlier folk-culture, thus accelerating the tempo of modern society and giving aid to the state-society in its dominance over the folk-society.

8. Manifestly the definitive, enduring society will be found in balance and equilibrium between the folk-society and the state-society in which not only the folkways and stateways will coincide but the technicways may be directed toward the orderly processes of societal development and towards attainable margins of survival.

9. The conclusion seems justified that there is uniformity in processes and orderly development from the earlier stages of society with its natural folk-regional culture, through its gradual extension and expansion on the levels of time, geographic quality, and cultural development into the later civilization of intellectual specialization, totalitarian state, megalopolitan culture, and technological power.

10. In the technicways which are "habits of the individual, customs of the group" to meet

survival needs in this new technological world may be found ways of measuring the contemporary state-society, of indicating trends from the folk-society to the state-society, of explaining many of the phenomena of the modern world, and of laying the groundwork for conserving and reconstructing the folk-society.

11. This groundwork is comprehended in the concept and practice of social planning through which the distance between the scientific "theoretical" and the "practical" may be bridged and through which the contributions of the social sciences and the physical sciences may be utilized in societal direction.